




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 23 May 2024

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENTS

Ayr Fire and Rescue Station

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.37 pm): It is now more than six months since I raised with the minister concerns relating to the staffing model at the Ayr Fire and Rescue Station. These concerns were raised on the back of other concerns relating to that facility—namely, the effects of PFAS on staff in the community, training and the replacement of an 18-year-old appliance and the need to replace the current 65-year-old station. Unfortunately, six months later, nothing has changed under the watch of this minister, who likes to talk the talk but has not delivered for my community. Like many similar stations in regional Queensland, the Ayr station operates with both full-time and auxiliary firefighters. Like many similar stations, staff from the Ayr Fire and Rescue Station respond to incidents not only in Ayr and surrounding towns but also along a substantial stretch of the Bruce Highway.

When the Ayr Fire and Rescue Station transitioned from a 24-hour staff model to the current format, the community was promised a suitable response in their time of need, and staff were promised they would be supported. I am pleased to advise that the community has received a suitable response, but that is only because of the sacrifices of the full-time staff at that facility. Since the transition away from the 24-hour staffing model, the number of auxiliary firefighters at the Ayr station has significantly reduced, similar to what we have seen in other locations.

It is a fact that in the last two financial years, on only one occasion has a full crew of four auxiliary firefighters been available—just once out of 318 calls for service. From those 318 calls for service, there were no auxiliary firefighters available to respond on 79 occasions.

Let's be clear: this situation is not the fault of the staff or the current auxiliary firefighters. Responsibility for the current situation sits at the feet of this Labor government. This government's failure to act means full-time staff have been on call virtually 24/7. Not only does that mean that these staff have been forced to put their lives on hold; it also means they have been unable to access their leave entitlements and it means increased risk to both staff and community members due to fatigue.

On behalf of the community, I would like to thank the full-time staff for their dedication and sacrifice and, on behalf of the community, I call on this government to end the ignorance and take action as a matter of urgency. Let's not forget for one moment: these are our emergency responders. These are the people we call in times of need. There is no more welcome sight than their red truck coming to respond to an emergency call for service. The least we can do is provide our emergency responders with the resources and staff that they deserve.